

PILOTAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Pilotage Exemption for Vessels of 1000 Gross Tonnage or Over Proceeding to and from Kwai Chung Container Terminals

Background

The legislative proposal for compulsory pilotage on ships of over 1000 GT or over proceeding to and from Kwai Chung Container Terminals has been discussed and supported by the Pilotage Advisory Committee in 1984. The proposal has been written in paragraph 2, Schedule 1 of the Pilotage Ordinance, Cap. 84 and enacted in 1985.

River Trade Vessels Berthing at Kwai Chung Container Terminals

2. As a continuous effort to improve traffic safety, the Marine Department (MD) has recently recruited river trade vessels above 700 GT to participate in the vessel traffic system. Through recording the movement of these vessels, the VTC notes that there are river trade vessels exceeding 1000 GT berthing at Kwai Chung. Further study reviews that in July 2001, there were 174 river trade vessels with GT between 1000 to 2000 making 1198 trips to Hong Kong. 16 of these vessels have performed 36 trips to Kwai Chung.

Policy Review

3. When the compulsory pilotage criteria were being formulated 17 years ago, the gross tonnage of the river trade vessels were about 300. This class of vessels was not considered to be regulated under the Pilotage Ordinance. As both the size and business of the river trade vessels have expanded, MD conducts a review to evaluate the appropriateness to apply compulsory pilotage to river trade vessels.

4. Having considered the relevant factors, MD is of the view that river trade vessels not carrying dangerous goods in bulk could be exempted from compulsory pilotage for the following reasons :-

- (i) **Local Knowledge of the Masters**
The river trade vessels are frequent callers to Hong Kong. The masters are well aware of the traffic situation and navigation hazards in the port. They have vast experience in berthing and manoeuvring at PCWAs and other congested piers. Berthing at Kwai Chung is relatively simple compared with the multi-tier berthing operations in the PCWAs.

- (ii) **Navigation Safety**
These river trade vessels are required to participate in the vessel traffic system and monitored by the VTC. Furthermore, they are regulated by the Kwai Chung Local Control Station when manoeuvring within Kwai Chung Basin.

- (iii) **Operation Mode**
The river trade vessels call at a number of wharfs to discharge and load a few containers at each location. They are unable to fulfill the 3 hours notice for booking pilots. Moreover, it is impractical for these vessels operating in the Harbour to proceed to a pilot boarding station for picking up pilots.

Recommendation

5. The purpose of this paper is to seek member's endorsement to exempt river trade vessels not carrying dangerous goods in bulk from compulsory pilotage while proceeding to and from any container terminals. Conditions of exemption will follow those set out in 1995 for the convention ferry using the China Ferry Terminal.

Presentation

6. This paper will be presented by Mr. C. K. Yeung of Marine Department.

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